(b) the details of the trade agreements made by the Government with each of these countries during each of the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BULLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) Sir, India has trade relations with almost all the major countries in East Asia, West Asia, East Europe, West Europe, America, Africa, CIS, Latin America and other regions.

(b) Briefly, most of the trade agreements stipulate the facilitation of bilateral trade between the two countries, efforts to expand bilateral trade, according to MFN treatment to each other in the matters tariffs, custom regulations, etc. effecting of payments in freely convertible currencies, providing assistance in holding trade fairs and exhibitions, periodic review of implementation of the agreement through the mechanism of Joint Commissions/Trade Committees, exchange of information/delegation etc. Names of countries with whom trade agreements were signed during the last three years are given in the attached statement.

STATEMENT

Names of countries with which trade agreements were signed by Ministry of Commerce during the last three years

1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Ivory Coast	South Africa	Burkina Faso
European Union	Croatia	Namibia
Slovak	Tunisia	Georgia
Czech	Israel	
—Slovenia	Myanmar	
	(Border Trade Agreement)	
Tajakistan		
Armenia		
Moldova		
Belarus		
Uzbekistan		
Lithuania		
Latvia		
Estonia		
Oman		

Jute Mills

1963. DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) the number of jute mills functioning in the North Eastern Region and the number of workers employed therein, mill-wise;

(b) whether these mills are facing problems on account of shrinkage in market due to competition from lower priced synthetic substitutes; and

(c) if so, the remedial steps being taken to tide over these difficulties?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a)

State	Name of Jute Mills	Average workers (Nos.)
Assam	Assam Co-Op Jute Mills Ltd.	800
Tripura	Tripura Jute Mills Ltd.	1,300

(b) and (c). Jute Mills in the country have been generally facing problems, interalia an account of shortage of high jute prices; as well as competition from cheaper synthetic substitutes. The scenario in the North Eastern States is also affected by the limited local market potential, higher transportation cost, high production cost, besides poor machinery condition, low labour & machine productivity etc. The Government has taken measures aimed at encouraging modernisation of Jute Mills as also development of value added jute diversified products to promote newer uses of the fibre.

Inflation Rate

1964. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the differential between the movements of the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and the Consumer Price Index in India during the last three years with the reasons therefor;

(b) whether the point-to-point variation in WPI helps in projecting the rate of inflation at about 45 percent of the actual average increase in prices over the same period;

(c) whether the Government propose to revise its formula for calculation of the rate of inflation on a realistic basis hereafter; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) The movement of the current series of Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) for the last three yeears is listed in the attached statement. Variation in the magnitude of the two indices is due to the difference in the composition and relative weights of their basket of commodities.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d). The proposal of revision of the current series of WPI and the modality to be adopted for computation of inflation rate alongwith other relevant issues are under consideration of the Working Group set up for the purpose under the Chairmanship of Prof. Y.K. Alagh.